



Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Milken Educator Award?

The Milken National Educator Award (most commonly known as the Milken Educator Award) provides public recognition and an unrestricted financial award of \$25,000 to elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and other education professionals who are furthering excellence in education.

How are Milken Educators selected?

Based on guidelines established by the Milken Family Foundation (see FAQ #3), the department of education in each participating state appoints an independent blue-ribbon committee to recommend candidates. There is no formal nomination or application process for the Award.

What are the criteria for selection?

The criteria for the selection of outstanding elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and other education professionals as Milken Educators include all of the following:

- Exceptional educational talent as evidenced by effective instructional practices and student learning results in the classroom and school;
- Exemplary educational accomplishments beyond the classroom that provide models of excellence for the profession;
- Strong long-range potential for professional and policy leadership; and
- Engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues and the community.

How are the Awards announced?

The main element is surprise. Each fall, newly selected recipients are taken completely by surprise at schoolwide assemblies. With an entourage of media and distinguished officials, a Foundation representative or the state chief of education typically notifies the recipient, often accompanied by the governor and other state and federal leaders.

Are the recipients required to do anything specific with their monetary awards?

Milken Educators may use their \$25,000 Awards in any way they wish. Many past recipients have used their Awards to finance their children's education or their own continuing education. Others have purchased equipment for their schools, established scholarships for their students, and even funded the adoption of children.

When do the recipients receive their monetary prize?

Recipients are notified of the Award during the program's National Notifications in the fall. The following April, they will participate in the Milken Family Foundation National Education Conference in Los Angeles, California, featuring an inspiring and emotional awards ceremony at which recipients receive their \$25,000 checks.

Are both elementary and secondary school educators selected each year?

The Award alternates each year between elementary and secondary educators.

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What other benefits besides the \$25,000 do recipients receive?

- At the Milken National Education Conference, new recipients engage in professional development and examine solutions to significant issues in education with leaders from academia, government, business and the community.
- The Milken Educator Award's visibility and reputation results in new opportunities for educators to improve education at local, state and national levels. New recipients join the Milken Educator Network, a group of more than 2,300 distinguished educators, plus other exemplary educators and business leaders from across the country, whose expertise serves as a valuable resource to fellow educators, legislators, school boards and others shaping the future of education.
- Opportunity to participate in ongoing projects such as the Milken Festival for Youth, the Lowell Milken Center Fellowship Program and *The Children of Willesden Lane*.

Why does the program put such an emphasis on teacher quality?

Recognizing and rewarding excellent educators has been a hallmark of the Milken Educator Awards program since its inception. However, due to the lack of opportunities for educators to thrive, more classroom teachers are leaving the profession and fewer young people are pursuing careers in education. The Milken Educator Awards aim to reverse this trend by focusing public attention on the need for able, caring and creative people to join the teaching profession in order to improve achievement for all students.

Besides the Milken Educator Awards, what other ways has the Milken Family Foundation worked toward meeting the crucial need for high-quality teachers?

While Milken Educators are a testament to America's many talented educators, the need to attract, develop, motivate and retain more highly effective teachers remains a profound challenge. To address this need, the Milken Family Foundation created a complementary initiative to the Milken Educator Awards, known as the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP)[™], to restructure and thus revitalize the teaching profession. Through sustained opportunities for career advancement, ongoing school-based professional development, instructionally focused accountability and performance-based compensation, TAP[™] has already demonstrated meaningful progress in drawing more teachers to careers in K-12 education—and keeping them there. What's more, TAP teachers and schools produce higher student achievement growth than their non-TAP counterparts. Since its inception in 1999, TAP has expanded to 220 schools, impacting roughly 6,200 teachers and 72,000 students.

Based on TAP's rapid growth and strong results, as well as increasing demand for comprehensive teacher quality reforms nationwide, in 2005 Lowell Milken established the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) as an independent public charity. NIET operates TAP with the goal of a quality teacher for every classroom in America.

What are other areas of interest for the Milken Family Foundation?

The Milken Family Foundation was established in 1982 to discover and advance inventive ways of helping people help themselves and those around them lead productive and satisfying lives. The Santa Monica, California-based foundation advances this mission primarily through its work in education and medical research. Among Milken Family Foundation initiatives and grant-based programs are the following:

- Milken Festival for Youth
- Mike's Math Club
- Lowell Milken Center
- Milken Translational Research Awards Program
- Milken Scholars
- Milken Archive of American Jewish Music
- Early Career Physician-Scientist Awards Program

Does the Milken Family Foundation have a Web site?

Yes – www.mff.org. For additional questions, call the Milken Family Foundation at 310.570.4775.